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AUTHOR Arnold, Mary Peterson
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ABSTRACT

A study examined the extent to which high school journalism advisers strive to achieve a balance between the right of school authorities to control the educational process and students' First Amendment rights. Questionnaires were sent to a stratified random sample of 500 public secondary schools across the United States. A total of 248 journalism advisers responded, for a response rate of 50%. Results indicated that: (1) most teachers supported the position that the student editor has the final responsibility for content decisions; (2) advisers with journalism certification, those with a heavy journalism class load, veteran teachers and suburban teachers were more likely than their counterparts to assume responsibility for supporting student freedom of expression across the involvement continuum; (3) most advisers would not seek the principal's approval before a sensitive, critical or controversial story is published; and (4) stories about school personnel competency and sex and sexuality were the stories that teachers, students, and administrators were most apt to disagree about. Findings suggest that the answer to the journalism teacher's dilemma is a pragmatic or situational one. Maintaining the balance between the ideals of journalism and the pragmatic realities of everyday school life is difficult but possible. Findings also point toward establishing policies that favor the hiring of certified journalism teachers. (Contains 51 notes and 31 tables of data. The questionnaire is attached.) (RS)

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STUDENT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND HIGH SCHOOL JOURNALISM ADVISERS: A LEGAL AND EDUCATIONAL DILEMMA

75 Word abstract

High school journalism teachers are caught in the middle. The students have Tinker. Administrators have Hazelwood. How can an adviser protect student rights and keep his or her job at the same time? Data collected via a national mail survey was analysed and the adviser's dilemma considered in the light of the findings. The paper outlines which teachers are best equipped to handle the problems and what strategies protect student rights and adviser job security.

by
Mary Peterson Arnold
School of Journalism & Mass Communication
The University of Iowa - 303 CC
Iowa City, IA 52242-1528
319-335-5833

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STUDENT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND HIGH SCHOOL JOURNALISM ADVISERS: A LEGAL AND EDUCATIONAL DILEMMA

INTRODUCTION

As is true of many who do research, my interests come from my life experiences. I have been both a journalist – a reporter and editor – and a high school journalism teacher. High school teachers and journalists have very different views of the world. One important area where there is great divergence is in the area of First Amendment freedoms.

As a journalist, I knew that the First Amendment protected my work from government interference. I knew that freedom of expression was not absolute, that the courts permitted governmental restrictions on certain categories of speech like obscenity and defamation. But, with these few exceptions, no agent of the state could tell me what I could and could not write about.

That was the job of my editor. And she, in turn, responded to the directives of the publisher. The publisher, as owner of the paper, was the person who made final decisions about what did or did not appear in the paper. As an employee of the paper, I was to abide by those decisions.

However, in the nation's public schools, the "chain of command" is not so simple. There are several different strands with which the high school journalism teacher has to

deal. First of all, newspapers are commercial endeavors, not educational institutions. The newspaper's ultimate goal is financial viability fostered by a healthy margin of profit for the investors. The ultimate goal in a high school is far different.

The goal of the nation's public schools is to educate future generations. In the public schools, young men and women inquire and learn through expressing their ideas. The freedom to do so is protected by the First Amendment. This is where the conflict comes in. How can students' intellectual freedom be protected in the public schools that are, themselves, an arm of government?

These schools are controlled by elected officials – school boards – and the administrators hired by school boards. The administrators hire teachers who work directly with students. The adviser is an employee of the school district who is charged with both teaching and encouraging journalism professional standards and – at the same time – protecting the students' freedom of expression. As such, the adviser is caught in the middle between his or her employer and his or her students.

In theory, the teacher's academic freedom to make independent educational decisions and to educate in a manner that he or she thinks is appropriate insulates students from governmental interference. For a variety of reasons, that is often not the case.

Probably no aspect of high school journalism has been more discussed, dissected and even litigated during the past generation that the issue of freedom of the press for high school publications. The issue is still a divisive one today. While many high school journalism teachers advocate extending the boundaries of expression permitted to high school journalists to limits comparable to those enjoyed by their collegiate and even their professional counterparts, others call for total teacher control.

For most high school students, the great attraction of working on the newspaper is this opportunity to express themselves publicly, to feel like they're making a difference. Administrators are often skeptical of too much freedom of the school press, a press that enjoys wide latitude in what it prints and deals more often with controversial subjects will cause the principal more headaches than a press that sticks to reporting about car washes and student council election results.[1]

Advisers can easily be caught in a storm of conflict when controversial materials appear in student publications. School administrators may punish advisers when the opinions expressed in those publications are disputed. The adviser can become the prime target of the school administrator, the school board, and parents and other members of the community.

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[1]Althought the wording has been changed somewhat, the argument outlined in this paragraph and the three that follow draw heavily on the materials found in the chapter on student press rights in Jack Dvorak, Larry Lain and Tom Dickson's book Journalism Kids Do Better (Bloomington: ERIC Clearning House on Reading, 1994).

On the other side of the adviser's dilemma are the prohibitions of the First and Fourteenth amendments that protect the students' freedom of the press. Considerable skill and judgment must be exercised to work effectively with the students, administrators and school patrons.

This conflict has not escaped notice. In the past 20 years, two U.S. Supreme Court cases have addressed student freedom of expression. In the first case – Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District or the black arm band case – the Court said students don't give up their right to freedom of expression at the schoolhouse gate. Since the late 1960s, school districts that have abided by this decision have allowed students to express themselves on the school grounds and in school-sponsored student publications. While the decision did not directly relate to high school publications, many educational and legal scholars interpreted the decision as giving students the right to make their own decisions about the content of student publications.

A decision twenty years later – Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier – reversed the trend. The Court said that the school – not students – is the publisher of the school newspaper. Therefore, school officials, not students, had the right to make content decisions. Since Hazelwood, a great deal of conflicting information about censorship and student publications has been published. Some recent studies where high school journalism advisers say that censorship is

not a major problem. However, cases cited it the Student Press Law Center Report paint a far different picture.[2]

This study focuses specifically on the adviser's dilemma. The purpose of this research project is to paint a realistic picture of the role played by the high school journalism adviser with respect to First Amendment considerations in the public schools.

THE STUDY

Student Press Law Center Report articles and research provide ample evidence advisers are caught between their administrators and their students. Often the adviser has little journalism training and is, therefore, not a professional with special competence in journalism. In most cases, the teacher did not seek to be a publication adviser. Research indicates that most journalism teachers were appointed by their administrators as a condition of hiring or were recruited after they were hired for a teaching job.[3] Since they often have no prior journalistic training, most

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[2]For a discussion of the cases and a summary of the research in this area see: Mary Arnold, Student Freedom of Expression and High School Journalism Advisers: A Legal and Educational Dilemma (Iowa City: Doctoral Dissertation, 1994) 35-69.

[3]Jack Dvorak, "Research Report: Secondary School Journalism in the United States" Indiana High School Journalism Institute Insight (April, 1992).

must "learn on the job."[4] The adviser who is uncertain of his or her own role is expected to protect the students' freedom to express their opinions and ideas and, at the same time, protect the school from any negative criticism students might express.

None of the post-Hazelwood research looks directly at this dilemma of the high school journalism teacher. The two most recent national adviser surveys look very broadly at many different aspects of advisers. Jack Dvorak's 1992 study looks at the working conditions, attitudes and characteristics of journalism teachers and advisers and does include two relevant questions discussed earlier in this proposal, one on academic freedom and one on the effects of Hazelwood.[5] Larry Lain's national study identifies factors that contribute to a healthy student press. He looks at community, school, financial and adviser characteristics.[6]

This study focuses specifically on the adviser's role dilemma. The purpose of this research project is to advance a realistic and appropriate educational picture of the role the high school journalism teacher plays with respect to First Amendment considerations in the public school. One

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[4]Ibid.

[5]Dvorak, 8.

[6]Larry. Lain, "A National Study of High School Newspaper Programs: Funding, Printing and Advising the Paper" (paper presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Secondary Education Division Midwinter meeting, Nashville, Tenn., 1992).

concern is that teachers may think their position is impossible or a "no win" situation. If teachers believe they cannot protect their students' freedom of expression and, at the same time, fulfill the terms of their employment, their role is an impossible one. In this event, information gained from the survey will be used as a basis for suggesting ways to reduce conflict by reconceptualizing the role of the teacher into a more realistic one. This, of course, assumes that some individuals believe that such a role is possible and desirable. Teachers, students and school districts will all benefit if the adviser's role is clear and is one the adviser understands and believes is possible for him or her to successfully fulfill.

The following research questions will be addressed in this study:

1 a. Do advisers acknowledge a responsibility for protecting student freedom of expression in high school journalism?

b. Do background characteristics play any role in how teachers view this responsibility?

2 a. To what extent do advisers strive to achieve a balance between the right of school authorities to control the educational process and students' First Amendment rights?

b. Do background characteristics play any role in how teachers strive to achieve that balance?

3. Over what issues is conflict between advisers and students and/or administrators apt to arise?

A mail survey of high school journalism educators across the nation was used to collect the information needed to

answer the research questions. A four-page questionnaire addressed to the journalism educator was sent to a random sample of 500 schools. Funds for duplication and postage were provided by a grant from the Quill and Scroll International High School Journalism Honor Society.

Development of the Questionnaire

The format and design of the questionnaire was suggested by the studies conducted by Don Dillman and Paul Erdos[7] and by a sample of a recent questionnaire developed by Dan Berkowitz.[8] Some questionnaire items were suggested by or modified from articles in the Student Press Law Center Report; the "Student Press Law Center Model Policy on Student Freedom of Expression;" the student freedom of expression laws passed in Iowa, California, Massachusetts, Colorado and Kansas; and other articles and studies in scholastic journalism.[9]

Demographic Information

The last page of the questionnaire elicited background characteristics or demographic information. Part 4 asked for information about the respondent's school – whether it

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[7]Don Dillman. Mail and Telephone Surveys (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1978) and Paul L. Erdos, Professional Mail Surveys (Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing, 1983).

[8]A copy of Dan Berkowitz's "Survey of Newspaper Journalists and News Sources" (Unpublished questionnaire, 1992) was used as a model for the formatting and page design for the questionnaire.

[9]A copy of the questionnaire is found in Appendix A.

published a newspaper or yearbook and had a policy of prior review.[10]

Part 5 asked for background information about the teacher who was completing the questionnaire.[11] Included were gender, college degree, college journalism major and classwork, teacher certification, tenure and years of teaching, advising and professional journalism experience.

Items used to collect demographic information were taken or modified from the recent studies conducted by Jack Dvorak and Larry Lain.[12] These items were used as a basis of comparison across such studies and, in some cases, to test the predictability of other items on the questionnaire (See research questions 1b and 2b).

Teacher Responsibilities

Also included in the questionnaire were 10 statements about the responsibilities of student newspaper advisers.[13] These questions were intended to gather data for research questions 1a and b – whether advisers acknowledge a responsibility for protecting student freedom of expression and whether advisers' background characteristics influence responses. Respondents were asked to indicate a level of agreement with each statement on a five-point scale. For the

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[10]See questionnaire in Appendix A, items 21-23.

[11]See questionnaire in Appendix A, items 25-38.

[12]Dvorak and Lain, op.cit.

[13]See questionnaire in Appendix A, items 8-17.

purposes of analysis the "disagree strongly" disagree somewhat" and "neutral" levels were combined as were the "agree strongly" and "agree somewhat." The dichotomized levels were then labeled "disagree" and "agree."

Legal, educational and journalistic theory formed the conceptual base for these 10 statements. The statements were drawn from the five state student freedom of expression laws and the Student Press Law Center Model Policy (See appendix B).

Three statements test teachers' knowledge of the classes of unprotected speech which is prohibited by law and not protected by the First Amendment.[14] The first refers to "fighting words" or "words that create a clear and present danger of inciting an audience to disorder or violence."[15] A different kind of unprotected speech is found in the next two statements that hinge on the legal doctrine of what is "obscene as to minors," which is more narrowly defined than obscenity in general. For minors, obscene materials are those which:

> The average person, applying community standards finds that the particular words in question appeal to a minor's purient interest in sex, and depicts or describes in an offensive manner sexual conduct or sexual act, and which lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value. When the audience for the publication is students, forms of expression that

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[14]See questionnaire in Appendix A, items 14-16.

[15]Don R. Pember, Mas Media Law, 6th ed.(Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown, 1993), 651.

are vulgar, indecent, lewd or sexually explicit may be considered obscene.[16]

The problem of offending readers – including teachers and community members – is also at issue in the next three statements.[17] In general all three statements are in conflict with the state student freedom of expression laws which prohibit prior review of materials – including controversial or distasteful or unpleasant materials.

The final statements ask who (the students, the adviser, or school officials) should make final content decisions.[18] All of the state freedom of expression laws and the SPLC Model Policy clearly state that students make final content decisions.

Hypothetical Situations

The questions stemming from seven hypothetical situations were designed to answer research questions 2a and b about whether advisers strive to achieve a balance between the right of school authorities to control the educational process and students' First Amendment rights. Teachers were asked to respond to a series of seven situations drawn from articles from the Student Press Law Center Report.[19]

16Model Policy on Student Publications Code (Des Moines, Iowa Department of Education, 1991), 3.

17See questionnaire in Appendix A, items 9-11.

18See questionnaire in Appendix A, items 8, 11, 12 and 17.

19See questionnaire in Appendix A, items 1-7.

Concepts derived from legal, educational and journalistic theory were included. Legal concepts were: student freedom of expression, prior restraint, prior review and censorship.[20] Journalism concepts included the different kinds of stories (editorials, features, news stories),[21] the role of the editor,[22] the importance of

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[20]Prior restraint is forbidding students from writing about or covering certain topics. Prior review, reading stories before they are printed, is a necessary precursor to censorship. Censorship happens when a school official stops the printing of part or all of an issue or the circulation of an issue of the school paper.

[21]An editorial, by definition, is "a staff-written statement the runs on the editorial page, giving the newspaper's official position on an issue." Jane T. Harrigan, The Editorial Eye (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 411.

Editorials are usually unsigned and present a consensus of the editorial staff. If a piece carries an author's byline, the opinions that are presented are those of the writer. The opinions are not assumed to represent those of the editorial staff.

A feature story is one that goes beyond factual news reporting with emphasis on human interest. Clarence Hach and Earl English, Scholastic Journalism (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1992), 326. While they are factual, they allow a reporter greater flexibility in style and allow a writer to apply his or her imagination to the facts, but they are not fiction. Hach & English, 61. Feature stories are not "made up" and often rely on interviews with real people.

By definition, a news story is factual, accurate, objective and balanced. Balance means that all sides are presented in their relative importance to the story as a whole. Significant details are selected to give a reader a fair understanding of an event – not a detailed account of every fact. Hach & English, 2-3.

[22]Reading and correcting student work is a duty performed by most teachers. Journalism convention assigns this duty to an editor. Geneva Overholser, editor of the Des Moines Register, says, "A good newspaper editor decides what kind of newspaper he or she wants, tells the staff what that is, and then alternately praises, prods and stays out of their way as they seek to make it come true." Harrigan, 4.

At the newspaper the person who is primarily responsible for grammar, accuracy and style is the copy editor. Copy editors go over stories checking for content, structure, style and errors. If a few changes are required, the copy editor makes them. If there are major changes, the copy editor occasionally sends the story back to the reporter for a rewrite.

accuracy, use of anonymous sources,[23] covering sensitive issues,[24] printing retractions and apologies[25] and publication policies.[26] Educational concepts include control of the classroom situation,[27] and the chain of command and responsibility in the public schools.[28]

Teachers were asked to respond as if they were newspaper advisers at their schools. They were asked to do this so all responses would come from the same perspective. Not all journalism educators are newspaper advisers. Some teach journalism classes and do not advise student publications.

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[23]The journalistic convention dictates that the use of an anonymous source is a rare exception, resorted to only when the information offered is so essential to readers that it must be reported immediately, and only when every possible way of attributing any part of the information to named sources has been exhausted.

Shield laws have been passed in about half of the states that protect professional journalists from being subpoenaed and forced to reveal confidential sources. In some of the states that do not have shield laws, state courts recognize a qualified privilege for journalists. This means the judge will first try to determine whether the information being sought is essential to the case and whether it can be obtained in some other way. Harrigan, 159

[24]Sensitive issues are those that may offend, disturb, shock or irritate readers.

[25]A newspaper will print a correction or retraction in the next issue when something that is inaccurate has been printed.

[26]Schools and school districts often adopt policies that state what may and may not be printed in a school newspaper. At issue here is what the laws of this country do and do not allow to be printed without penalty and whether school policy may be more restrictive than the law would allow outside a school setting.

[27]Some advisers allow students to run stories about events that challenge the school administration's right to set and enforce school policies. At issue is who and what can be controlled in a school setting.

[28]This includes both the employee/employer relationship between the principal and the teacher and limits set for what principal can order a teacher to do in order to keep his or her job is the issue here

Others advise the yearbook, teach photography and/or direct the student radio or television station.

Response categories were developed for each situation. The range of responses was not fixed and varied from item to item. Because multiple responses were appropriate in some cases, teachers were also allowed to check more than one.

The Story Topics

Conflict between advisers, students and administrators is often a result of the topic of the story involved. One section of the questionnaire consisted of three open-ended questions.[29] Teachers were asked to write as many topics as they could think of in the space provided. They were told that they could use an additional sheet of paper if they needed to do so. The first question asked for topics that would require prior review and approval from the principal before a story is published. The second asked for topics that concerned the teachers enough to show them to the principal. The teachers were also asked to explain what had happened in each case. The third was about topics over which teachers and students had disagreed in the past year. Once again, teachers were asked to indicate what had happened to each story.

Since teachers were asked to list story topics that they could think of, some teachers wrote many; others wrote none.

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[29]See questionnaire in Appendix A, items 18-20.

If a teacher listed many topics, all were included in the tally. However, since most of them were listed by only one teacher, to make the list more manageable, the lists were collapsed to topics listed by multiple teachers.

The Pretest

The questionnaire was pretested on a group of 10 high school journalism teachers attending the Journalism Education Association Conference in Long Beach, California, in April of 1993. The group included four participants in the multicultural outreach program, their mentors, and two other members of the organization who were attending a training session for outreach participants. This group was selected because of they were a truly diverse group, representing advisers from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, parts of the country, sizes of schools and years of teaching experience. Some of the teachers advised a yearbook and some a newspaper; others advised both.

Each of the teachers received a cover letter explaining the intent of the study and asking the teacher to complete the questionnaire and make recommendations concerning the wording, appropriateness and clarity of the questionnaire items.

After the teachers completed the questionnaire and wrote comments, a discussion was held among the 10 teachers and the researcher to further address any concerns. Based on the comments and recommendations, the questionnaire was refined.

One item was eliminated and the wording of a few items were altered to make their intent clearer.

Selection of the Subjects

A listing of all public secondary schools was obtained from the National Data Resource Center of the U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Included in the list are addresses, the types of schools, where they are located, enrollment figures for grades 7-12, racial and ethnic enrollment by group and the number of teacher full-time equivalents.[30]

To create a representative sample the number of schools and enrollment in grades 10-12[31] for each of the seven different locale categories based on community size or population was drawn from the U.S. Department of Education listing. Locale listings are presented on Table 1 below.

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[30]In two recent high school journalism surveys, Jack Dvorak and Laurence Lain created a skip interval random sample by selecting every twelfth and fiftieth schools (depending on the sample desired) from the Quill and Scroll national data base of all public and private secondary schools. Lain's and Dvorak's sampling process selects too many potential respondents from rural locations that have low student enrollment but high numbers of schools. Too few school personnel from locations with high enrollments but lower numbers of schools are included. Since the proposed study seeks to present representative data of the adviser's impact on students, a stratified sampling procedure was employed.

[31]Grades 10-12 were used because many secondary schools do not include grades 7, 8, 9, but some do. Using enrollment data from those three grades provides a constant for comparison.

Table 1. – Locale Listings as defined by the National Data Resource Center of the U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement based on Population Density

Locale	Definition
Large Central City	Central city of Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) with population greater than or equal to 400,000 or a population density greater than or equal to 6,000 persons per square mile.
Mid-size Central City	Central city of SMSA but not designated Large Central City.
Urban Fringe of Large City	Place within an SMSA of Large Central City and defined as urban by US Bureau of Census.
Urban Fringe of Mid-size City	Place within an SMSA of Mid-size city and defined as urban by US Bureau of Census
Large Town	Place not within an SMSA, but with population greater than or equal to 25,000 and defined as urban by US Bureau of Census.
Small Town	Place not within an SMSA, with population less than 25,000 but greater than or equal to 2,500 and defined as urban by US Bureau of Census
Rural	Place with population less than 2,500 and defined as rural by US Bureau of Census.

A stratified sampling method helps to ensure that the sample is representative of student enrollment. By dividing each location's total enrollment by the national total enrollment a percentage figure for each location is derived. Since a total respondent number of 300 was desired for statistical analysis, a random sample of 500 was selected. Multiplying that percentage by 500 gave the number of schools from each location desired. Dividing the number of schools

to be sampled from each location into the number of schools in each location established the interval in each location.[32]

Table 2. – The Stratified Sample based on Locale

Locale	N of Schools	Enrollment 10-12	Average Enroll-ment/ School	% Total Enrollment	N in Sample	Inter-val
Large central city	1,637	1,314,126	803	16.7	83	20
Mid-size central city	1,589	1,258,507	792	16.0	80	20
Urban fringe-large city	1,712	1,387,264	810	17.6	88	19
Urban fringe-mid-size city	1,358	976,206	719	12.4	62	22
Large town	504	224,711	446	2.9	14	35
Small town	3,725	1,659,623	446	21.1	105	35
Rural	5,123	1,052,265	205	13.37	67	77
National Total	15,648	7,872,702	503	100	500	

Procedures

A four-page questionnaire addressed to the journalism educator was sent in April of 1993 to each of the 500 schools in the stratified sample. A postage-paid, self-addressed envelope was included. Three weeks later, in May, a follow up was sent to non-respondents.[33]

A total of 248 or 50 percent of the teachers responded. This rate, while acceptable for analysis, is lower than

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[32]Dan Berkowitz, "Debunking the Response Rate Myth: Reflections from Six Mail Surveys" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Association of Public Opinion Research, Chicago, Illinois, 1992).

[33]Copies of the questionnaire and letters are found in the appendix.

anticipated. Several teachers commented that receiving the questionnaire so near to the end of the school year was a problem. This time of year is a very busy one for teachers who said they would have spent more time answering the question had it arrived earlier in the year.

Representativeness: School Type, Locale, Enrollment

Three fields of information from the data base of all public secondary schools from the National Data Resource Center of the U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement were added to the responses received from each survey: type of school, location and total number of students enrolled in grades 10-12. These were added to provide some basis for determining if the sample and respondents were representative and comparable to the national figures derived from other studies.

Since a stratified sampling procedure was used, one would anticipate that some significant differences would be found between the current study and other recent studies that did not stratify the sample. As the following example demonstrates, the differences were negligible. In fact, an exact match is often found between data derived from the current study and recent studies by Jack Dvorak and Larry Lain who did not stratify the sample.

For instance, when comparing the types of schools, 95 percent of the respondents to the current study attend

standard schools compared with a national percentage of 94. The label "standard" is used by the U.S. Department of Education for schools that are not special education, vocational or alternative schools. None of the respondents went to special education schools; 1 percent of the nation's schools are special education schools. Two percent of both the respondents' and the nation's schools were vocational; 3 percent of both were alternative schools. Thus, it would appear that the respondents are very close to the national averages on this variable.

For locale, the percentages of respondents varied slightly, but three of the seven were very close to the national averages. Even though the sample was stratified by locale, proportionally more teachers from two locales, small towns and rural schools, returned the questionnaire than did those from two other locales, mid-size central cities and urban fringe of large cities. The percentage of teachers in large central cities, urban fringe of mid-size cities and large towns matched the national averages.

The average enrollment of students in grades 10-12 for the respondents was 708 compared to the national average of 503. Table 3 reveals that in four out of seven of the locations, respondents were from schools that had higher than average enrollments for the particular category. Since the sample was stratified, the schools that reported higher than average enrollments were the schools most heavily sampled.

The sampling procedure, therefore, accounts for the higher than average national enrollment figure for the respondents.

Table 3. – Comparison of National and Respondents' Average School Enrollment by Locale

Locale	National Average Enrollment/ School	Respondents' Average Enrollment/ School
Large central city	803	797
Mid-size central city	792	953
Urban fringe-large city	810	918
Urban fringe-mid-size city	719	832
Large town	446	402
Small town	446	537
Rural	205	173
National Total	503	708

One other piece of data helps to reinforce the representativeness of those who responded to the questionnaire. The number of surveys that were returned blank with a note saying that the school did not have a student newspaper, yearbook or journalism class was 14 or about 5.6 percent. This figure replicates exactly the findings of Jack Dvorak's recent study.[34] On two other background characteristics the current study came very close to Dvorak's findings. While Dvorak found that 92.6 percent publish a yearbook, the current study found 93.9 percent. Dvorak found the 78.8 percent publish a newspaper, while the current study found 87.9 percent.

[34]Dvorak, 2.

Thus, by looking at the national Department of Education figures and comparing the number of schools that do not have a journalism program with results from the most recent comprehensive study, it appears that the respondents fairly closely represent the averages found in other studies. Therefore, we can say that the sample is representative in that these aggregate data closely approximate the same aggregates of the population.[35] Thus it is possible to generalize that the results are representative of the nation as a whole.

If the schools are representative of the nation, are the advisers who responded themselves representative? This question will be addressed next.

Adviser Background

Seventy-two percent of those who responded to the gender question on the survey were women. This compares with Jack Dvorak's 1991 finding of 71.5 percent.[36] The U.S. Department of Education reports that 70.9 percent of all secondary school teachers are women.[37]

The current study found that 53 percent of the teachers had master's degrees. This compares with Lain's finding of

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[35]Earl Babbie, The Practice of Social Research, 3rd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1983), 145.

[36]Dvorak, 5.

[37]Digest of Education Statistics, 1990, 75.

50 percent[38] and Dvorak's finding of 53 percent. Seventeen percent of those in this study majored in journalism, which is considerably higher that Lain's 12 percent and 7.8 percent in Dvorak's study.[39] Of those who said that they had not majored in journalism, 54 percent said that they had taken some journalism classes for credit. This leaves about 30 percent of the advisers in the current study with no formal journalism training.

The current study found that 45 percent of the teachers said they were certified to teach journalism. This is much higher than the 28 percent Dvorak found.[40] It should be noted that some states do not certify teachers in journalism. They only require that the teacher be certified, most often in English or social studies. Thus it is conceivable that some advisers claim to be certified to teach journalism who are not.

The teachers in the current study have been teaching for 14.4 years compared with Dvorak's finding of 14.6 years.[41] Findings for the percentage of journalism classes taught each day are similar between the two studies. Ninety percent of the teachers in the current study advise student publications. Dvorak found 27 percent; the current study 29

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[38]Lain, 12.

[39]Dvorak, 3.

[40]Dvorak, 4.

[41]Dvorak, 5.

percent.[42] Twenty-nine percent of the teachers in the current study applied for or volunteered for their jobs. Another 24 percent were told that they had to take the advising job to get a teaching job for which they were applying. Another 16 percent were appointed by the principal; the rest were drafted or the job came to them by default. Combining the figures for "appointed by the principal" with those for "had to take it to get the job," the total comes to 40 percent. That is very close to Dvorak's 43 percent figure for those who first considered getting involved in journalism education "after assignment by an administrator." Thus a plurality of journalism educators doesn't get involved because of a prior interest of their own, but because they were either assigned or asked to do so.

The average number of years that the advisers in the current study have been journalism teachers is 7.7, far less than the 14.6 years they have been teaching. This compares with Lain's study where the median years of advising experience were five and Dvorak's figure of 8.4 years. Dvorak also found that as years of teaching experience increased, the less likelihood there is that the teachers continue to advise student publications. In other words, teachers tend to move away from the journalism duties as they gain teaching experience. These trends indicate that most

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[42]Dvorak, 7.

journalism advisers are drafted by administrators and quit advising several years before they retire from teaching.[43]

In the current study, newspaper advisers had been on the job for 8.0 years; yearbook advisers for 3.6 years and other publication advisers for 2.3 years.

Most advisers in the current study and other recent studies have no professional journalism experience. Only 31 percent in the current study claimed any; 10 percent of those were free-lancers, 11 percent had been reporters, 4 percent were stringers and 6 percent had been in advertising or public relations. Others had worked in broadcast, as columnists, editors, photographers or in layout, paste up or typesetting. Respondents were allowed to name more than one job; all of which were included in this tally. In Lain's study, 25 percent had worked at least part-time for a commercial daily or weekly newspaper.[44] Dvorak found that 24.4 percent had professional media experience of an average of 4.8 years.[45]

Adviser Background as Predictor Variables

Research questions 1b and 2b ask if certain characteristics in an adviser's background have an influence on how teachers answered the questionnaire. To answer this

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[43]Dvorak, 5.

[44]Lain, 13.

[45]Dvorak, 5

question, several background characteristics were used as predictor variables and statistical tests were run.

To determine if the responses to one variable can be used to predict those of another, a researcher must first consider how the subjects would be distributed if variables were unrelated to one another by comparing observed frequencies with those that might be expected. Researchers must interpret these data in a way that permits of statement of whether the relationship is significant. This can be done by reducing the data to chi-square statistic and performing a test known as the chi-square "goodness of fit" test. A chi-square is simply a value showing the relationship between expected frequencies and observed frequencies. A cross tabulation is an extension of this goodness of fit test where two or more variables are tested simultaneously.

Once the value of chi-square is known, the goodness of fit test is conducted to determine whether this value represents a significant difference in frequency. To do this, two values are necessary. This first is the probability level that is predetermined by the researcher, the second, called degrees of freedom, is the number of scores in any particular test that are free to vary in value. For this study, the probability level of .05 or lower was selected.

One of the limitations to the goodness of fit test is that small samples may not produce significant results in cases that could have revealed a significant result if a larger sample had been used. When more than one-fifth of the

cross-tab cells have a frequency of less than five responses, the significance tests are suspect. When this happens a researcher may combine or collapse categories into fewer, larger ones which may enable the researcher to reveal a significant result.

The results of comparison of three collapsed variables are presented in the chapter that follows. Neither crosstabs that were above probability level of .05 nor results where significance tests are suspect are included in the findings chapter.

The grouping or collapsed variables created are: locale, journalism class load and years of journalism teaching experience. These were selected because all three are ordinal or range variables. Locale, the first, is ranked in seven categories by population from large central cities to rural areas by the U.S. Department of Education. The journalism class load ranged from 0 to 100 percent in the second. The third, the number of years of journalism teaching, ranged from 1 to 37 years.

Table 4. – Percentages of Respondents in Collapsed Locale Categories

Locale	Responses
Urban	35.1%
Suburban	35.9%
Town/Rural	29.0%
Total	100.0% (N=248)

In collapsing the locale variable, the two central city categories were combined into one called "urban," the two urban fringe categories were combined into "suburban" and the two town and the rural categories were collapsed into "town/rural." As Table 4 above indicates, approximately one-third of the respondents fell into each of the new categories.

In collapsing the percentage of journalism classes taught, three categories were created that represent "no classes or extracurricular," "up to half-time" and "half-time or greater." As Table 5 reveals, over two-thirds of the teachers teach journalism from one class to half-time each day. The remaining third of the respondents is almost equally divided between those for whom journalism is an extracurricular assignment and those who teach journalism from half- to full-time each day.

Table 5. – Percentages of Respondents in Collapsed Journalism Class Load Categories

Journalism Class Load	Respondents
No Classes	15.1%
< Half-time	68.0%
Half-time or >	16.9%
Total	100.0% (N=231)

In collapsing the number of years taught into three categories, three logical periods in any teacher's life were applied. The first is the "probationary" period that encompasses the first two years of a teacher's life. The second is the period between the probationary period up to and including the point at which a teacher has taught an "average" number of years. The final category includes experienced teachers who have taught more than the average number of years. As Table 6 shows, three new categories each include roughly one-third of the respondents.

Table 6. – Percentages of Respondents in Collapsed Years of Journalism Teaching Experience Categories

Label	Number of Years	% of Respondents
New Teacher	0-2 years	30.8%
Average Years	3-8 years	34.6%
Veteran Teacher	>8 years	34.6%
Total		100.0% (N=231)

A fourth variable was also cross tabulated. This was the nominal variable stating whether or not a teacher was certified to teach journalism. Almost one-half (45 percent) of the teachers are certified.

Table 7. – Percentage of Respondents in Journalism Certification Categories

Journalism Certification	Percentage
Certified	44.8%
Not Certified	55.2%
Total	100.0% (N=248)

To determine if these four characteristics overlap, a Pearson correlation matrix was run on the recoded variables. As shown in Table 7 below there is a small correlation among three of the characteristics: those with journalism certification, years of journalism teaching experience and journalism class load. However, there is still ample room for differences to appear. The small correlation will account for some of the redundancy in the findings chapter.

This is not surprising because it is logical to assume that teachers who spend more than half of each day teaching journalism classes are most likely to be those who have journalism certified. High schools usually will not allow a teacher to teach more than half-time in subjects that were not their major areas in college. Teachers who majored in journalism in college are most apt to be certified in

journalism. It also follows that teachers with more experience in teaching journalism are more likely to have obtained certification over the years. That teachers with a heavy journalism class load also are veteran teachers is also no surprise. High school teachers try to limit the number of different classes they teach so they have fewer classes to prepare. For instance, a teacher who teaches two sections of journalistic writing and three of English I has only two "preps." Newer teachers often "get stuck" with several classes of only one section and so often have four or five "preps."

Table 8: Pearson Correlation Matrix for Four Adviser Background Characteristics

	Journalism Certification N=248	Years of Journalism Teaching N=231	Locale N=248	Journalism Class Load N=231
Journalism Certification	1.0			
Years of Journalism Teaching	.29	1.0		
Locale	-.01	-.01	1.0	
Journalism Class Load	.31	.36	-.13	1.0

In Summary

This study focuses on the dilemma the high school journalism teacher faces with regard to protecting both the students' right to freedom of expression and the adviser's responsibility to the school district where he or she is employed. Through a national survey of a random sample of high school journalism teachers, data were collected to

attempt to determine the how teachers view and deal with that dilemma. The next chapter presents the findings of the extent that advisers acknowledge responsibility for protecting students and keeping his or her job. Whether certain background characteristics make that job easier or harder is also discussed along with those story topics that are most apt to cause conflict.

FINDINGS

To determine what role advisers would take with respect to student freedom of expression, the findings from the responsibilities and hypothetical situations sections of the questionnaire were analyzed along a continuum of the relationships of the people involved. At the first level, students make all content decisions and do all editing themselves. The next two levels reflect limited and total adviser involvement during both story assignment and production phases of a student newspaper. For the fourth level the principal and/or other members of the school administration have been involved. In the last level, the adviser goes outside the normal school chain of command and consults with others. Other teachers, teachers' organizations, parents, other community members and lawyers and legal assistance organizations are included here.

These levels were developed from the five state student freedom of expression laws, the SPLC Model Policy and the articles and research discussed in Chapters II and III of this dissertation. The five levels are described on Table 9 below:

Table 9 – Levels of Involvement in Making Content Decisions and Editing the Student Newspaper

#	Level	Description
1.	Students Only	The teacher advises students but is not involved in making content decisions or editing.
2.	Limited Adviser Involvement	The adviser reads the copy for journalistic standards and removes unprotected speech (obscenity, fighting words, etc.).
3.	Adviser Takes Over	The adviser makes content decisions and edits stories.
4.	Principal/ Administration Involved	Before publishing the newspaper, the adviser consults with or gets approval from the principal or other school officials.
5.	Outsiders Involved	The adviser seeks approval or assistance from others (teachers, community members, lawyers, etc.).

Research Question 1a: Who is responsible?

To determine if advisers acknowledge a responsibility for protecting student freedom of expression, the 10 statements of responsibility were positioned on the involvement continuum. The results are found on Table 10 that follows.

Table 10. – Adviser Responsibility at Each Level of the Involvement Continuum

Who is Involved?	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Total	N
Students Only	Student editor should have final responsibility for paper's content.	61.8%	38.2%	100%	233
Limited Adviser Involvement	Adviser guided more by journalistic standards than educational theory.	54.8%	45.2%	100%	230
	Adviser remove language that would advocate violence.	80.0%	20.0%	100%	230
	Adviser remove language that describes sexual acts or practices.	64.9%	35.1%	100%	228
	Adviser remove obscene words.	83.1%	16.9%	100%	231
Adviser Takes Over	Advisers not students make final decisions about papers' contents.	55.6%	44.4%	100%	234
	Advisers not principal make final decisions about papers' contents.	85.2%	14.8%	100%	230
Principal/ Administration Involved	Principal approve controversial stories before published.	31.1%	68.9%	100%	228
Outsiders Involved	Each teacher approve stories that include information about him or her.	21.7%	78.3%	100%	230
	Stories should not offend members of community.	31.8%	68.2%	100%	233

Information presented on this table shows a pattern of teacher response. In the first level, most teachers support

the position that the student editor has the final responsibility for content decisions. As the level of teacher involvement increases, most teachers support the statements that journalism standards are more important than educational theory. They also say that advisers should remove fighting words and obscenities. For the third level (advisers assume control), the teachers are almost evenly divided on whether teachers or students make final content decisions, but clearly favor the adviser's right to decide over that of the principal. For the final two levels, most teachers do not want the principal, administrators or community members involved. In summary, most advisers say that they and their students – not the principal or outsiders – are responsible for determining the content. They are also in agreement that the adviser should remove language that falls under the "unprotected speech" rubric from student stories.

Research Question 1b:

Do background characteristics play a role in how teachers view this responsibility?

Comparing these results with those obtained when adviser background characteristics are factored in, shows that advisers from certain categories agree and disagree with some of these statements to a greater extent. Table 11 below shows the results for the first level.

Table 11. – Influence of Background Characteristics on Responsibility Statements at the "Students Only" Level

Statement	Background Characteristic	Agree	Disagree	Total	N
Student editor should have final responsibility for paper's content.	Journalism Certification				
	Not certified	54.1%	45.9%	100%	122
	Certified	70.3%	29.3%	100%	111
	Total	61.8%	38.2%	100%	233
	X^2=16.4, df 1, p<.01				
	Journalism Class Load				
	Extra-curricular	47.1%	52.9%	100%	34
	Less than half-time	59.9%	40.1%	100%	157
	Half-time or more	84.6%	15.4%	100%	39
	Total	62.2%	38.8%	100%	230
	X^2=12.0, df 2, p<.04				

Teachers with journalism certification and those with a heavy journalism teaching load are stronger advocates for the students' right to determine their newspapers' contents. These teachers are more apt to select a "hands off" position than their counterparts.

For the second level, three of the four statements of limited adviser involvement produced significant results. Those results are presented on Table 12 that follows.

Table 12. – Influence of Background Characteristics on Responsibility Statements at the "Limited Adviser Involvement" Level

Statement	Background Characteristic	Agree	Disagree	Total	N
Adviser guided more by journalistic standards than educational theory.	Locale				
	Urban	66.7%	33.3%	100%	81
	Suburban	52.4%	47.6%	100%	82
	Rural/Town	43.3%	56.7%	100%	67
	Total	54.8%	45.2%	100%	230
	X^2=18.4, df 2, p<.02				
	Journalism Teaching Experience				
	New Teacher	41.2%	58.8%	100%	68
	Average Years	57.0%	43.0%	100%	79
	Veteran Teacher	62.5%	37.5%	100%	80
	Total	54.2%	45.8%	100%	227
	X^2=17.1, df 2, p<.03				
	Journalism Class Load				
	Extra-curricular	31.4%	68.6%	100%	35
	Less than half-time	56.5%	43.5%	100%	154
	Half-time or more	71.1%	28.9%	100%	38
	Total	55.1%	44.9%	100%	227
	X^2=12.0, df 2, p<.00				
Adviser remove language that describes sexual acts or practices	Journalism Class Load				
	Extra-curricular	80.0%	20.0%	100%	35
	Less than half-time	66.0%	34.0%	100%	153
	Half-time or more	43.2%	56.8%	100%	37
	Total	64.4%	35.6%	100%	225
	X^2=11.1, df 2, p<.00				
Adviser remove obscene words.	Journalism Class Load				
	Extra-curricular	94.3%	5.7%	100%	35
	Less than half-time	84.1%	15.9%	100%	157
	Half-time or more	66.7%	33.3%	100%	36
	Total	82.9%	17.1%	100%	228
	X2=10.4, df 2, p<.01				

More urban advisers, veteran teachers and teachers with a heavy journalism class load support journalism standards over educational theory, and are thus apt to follow the journalistic traditions of freedom of expression. Advisers for whom journalism is an extra-curricular assignment are the most cautious about language describing sexual acts and obscene words.

The results for the third level, where teachers take over content decisions and editing duties, are found on Table 13. Most urban and rural teachers agree that the teacher, not the students, makes the final decisions. However, most suburban advisers disagree. In this case, suburban advisers are stronger advocates for students deciding the contents of their newspapers. All teachers are in agreement on the second statement on Table 13 below. However, veteran teachers and teachers with journalism certification are the strongest supporters of advisers – not principals – deciding what will appear in the student newspaper.

Table 13. – Influence of Background Characteristics on Responsibility Statements at the "Adviser Takes Over" Level

Statement	Background Characteristic	Agree	Disagree	Total	N
Advisers not students make final decisions about papers' contents.	Locale				
	Urban	60.5%	39.5%	100%	81
	Suburban	42.7%	57.3%	100%	82
	Rural/Town	64.8%	35.2%	100%	71
	Total	55.6%	44.4%	100%	234
	X^2=8.8, df 2, p<.01				
	Journalism Class Load				
	Extra-curricular	68.6%	31.4%	100%	35
	Less than half-time	56.7%	43.3%	100%	157
	Half-time or more	38.5%	61.5%	100%	39
	Total	55.4%	44.6%	100%	231
	X^2=7.1, df 2, p<.03				
Advisers not principal make final decisions about papers' contents.	Journalism Teaching Experience				
	New Teacher	73.5%	26.5%	100%	34
	Average Years	85.9%	14.2%	100%	155
	Veteran Teacher	92.1%	7.9%	100%	38
	Total	85.0%	15.0%	100%	227
	X^2=5.1, df 2, p<.08				
	Journalism Certification				
	Not certified	80.8%	19.2%	100%	120
	Certified	90.0%	10.0%	100%	110
	Total	85.2%	14.8%	100%	230
	X^2=3.8, df 1, p<.05				

Table 14. – Influence of Background Characteristics at the "Principal/Administration Involved" Level

Statement	Background Characteristic	Agree	Disagree	Total	N
Principal approve controversial stories before published.	Journalism Class Load				
	Extra-curricular	51.4%	48.6	100%	35
	Less than	30.5%	69.5%	100%	154
	Half-time or more	16.7%	83.3%	100%	36
	Total	31.6%	44.4%	100%	225
	X^2=10.2, df 2, p<.01				
	Journalism Teaching Experience				
	New Teacher	41.4%	58.6%	100%	70
	Average Years	35.9%	64.1%	100%	78
	Veteran Teacher	18.2%	81.8%	100%	77
	Total	31.6%	68.4%	100%	225
	X^2=10.2, df 2, p<.01				

For level 4 on Table 14 above, teachers with heavy journalism loads and veteran teachers are the least likely to involve the principal. No significant differences were found in the responses for level 5.

In summary, advisers with journalism certification, those with a heavy journalism class load, veteran teachers and suburban teachers are more likely than their counterparts to take on the responsibility for supporting student freedom of expression across the involvement continuum. When journalism is an extra-curricular assignment or the teacher is new or does not have journalism certification support for student freedom of expression is most apt to be missing. This is true across all the levels.

Research Question 2a:

Do advisers strive to balance the right of school authorities to control the educational process with students' First Amendment rights?

Teachers were asked to respond to a series of seven hypothetical situations (listed below) as if they were newspaper advisers at their schools. They were asked to do this so all responses would come from the same perspective because not all journalism educators are newspaper advisers. Some teach journalism classes and do not advise student publications. Others advise the yearbook, teach photography and/or direct the student radio or television station. Because multiple responses were appropriate in some cases, teachers could check more than one. Response questions were specified on the questionnaire, but teachers were encouraged to list their own responses. None of responses that teachers listed yielded significant results.

The hypothetical situations involved:

1. An editorial calling for abolishing Martin Luther King Day as a national holiday.
2. An article of questionable accuracy on teenage suicide.
3. A feature story on drug problem in the school that contains anonymous interviews.
4. A news story about a demonstration protesting an administration policy.
5. The principal asking to see all copy before newspaper goes to print.
6. The principal saying the adviser must write and print a letter of apology.

7. The principal drafting a policy that he can prohibit any articles he thinks are harmful.

The responses were placed on the five levels of the involvement continuum. Because the responses were organized by the kind of response given rather than hypothetical situation, it is possible that there is more than one response to a given situation at any one level.

Included on the questionnaire were four possible responses to each hypothetical situation.[46] These responses were tallied and placed along the involvement continuum. For each level, the responses that involve the greatest amount of autonomy for students are placed first. As the responses go down the following table the level of adviser involvement increases. The results of the tally for the first level of the continuum are found on Table 15 below.

[46]As stated earlier, in each situation the fifth or "other" responses dropped out because there were not statistically significant.

Table 15. – Adviser Responses to Hypothetical Situations at the "Students Only" Level of Involvement

Situation	Response	No	Yes	Total	N
Principal asked to see all copy before newspaper goes to print	Refuse to allow principal to read copy	92.1%	7.9%	100%	231
Article of questionable accuracy on teenage suicide	Refuse to read copy and correct mistakes	98.8%	1.2%	100%	231
Editorial calling for abolishing Martin Luther King Day as a national holiday	Publish editorial as is	68.2%	31.2%	100%	231
Feature story on drug problem in your school that contains anonymous interviews	Publish story as it stands	72.5%	27.5%	100%	233
News story about a demonstration protesting administration policy	Publish article as written	65.7%	34.3%	100%	230

As Table 16 shows, very few advisers would take a total "hands off" position and refuse to become involved, but about one third of the advisers would allow the students to publish articles on topics that are sensitive, critical or controversial without making changes.

As the table below shows, most advisers would take some limited action in response to an article or situation that involves a student's freedom of expression. These actions all fall under the rubric of "teaching" or showing students about items in question rather than making any actual changes.

Table 16. – Adviser Responses to Hypothetical Situations at the "Limited Adviser Involvement" Level

Situation	Response	No	Yes	Total	N
Article of questionable accuracy on teenage suicide	Teach students to proof and verify facts	25.8%	74.2%	100%	231
Principal asked to see all copy before newspaper goes to print	Tell students about principal's concern	49.6%	50.4%	100%	228
Article of questionable accuracy on teenage suicide	Point out factual errors for students to correct	38.1%	61.9%	100%	231

When teachers take on greater editorial control, they do so in increments. First they tell students how to rewrite, next they actually edit the stories themselves, then they forbid students to publish and, finally, they write and print a letter of apology.

Table 17. – Adviser Responses to Hypothetical Situations at the "Adviser Takes Over" Level of Involvement

Situation	Response	No	Yes	Total	N
Editorial calling for abolishing Martin Luther King Day as a national holiday	Have student rewrite editorial to include both sides	71.4%	28.6%	100%	234
Feature story on drug problem in your school that contains anonymous interviews	Have student rewrite story omitting anonymous sources	85.7%	14.2%	100%	233
News story about a demonstration protesting administration policy	Have student rewrite article to include administration' s reasons	37.8%	62.2%	100%	230
Article of questionable accuracy on teenage suicide	Read copy and correct mistakes as instructed	87.9%	12.1%	100%	231
News story about a demonstration protesting administration policy	Forbid students to publish	99.6%	0.4%	100%	230
Editorial calling for abolishing Martin Luther King Day as a national holiday	Not allow students to publish	88.9%	11.1%	100%	231
Principal says you must write and print a letter of apology	Write and print letter of apology	91.6%	8.4%	100%	225

As Table 17 above shows, the percentages of teachers who would tell students to rewrite an article varies with the type of article and topic. Most teachers, for instance, would have students rewrite a news story to include both sides but not an editorial. However, most advisers stop here and do not actually stop publication or take further action.

Table 18. – Adviser Responses to Hypothetical Situations at the "Principal/Administration Involved" Level

Situation	Response	No	Yes	Total	N
Principal asked to see all copy before newspaper goes to print	Ask principal to trust professional judgment	42.5%	57.5%	100%	228
Feature story on drug problem in your school that contains anonymous interviews	Publish story and alert the principal	51.1%	48.9%	100%	233
Principal says you must write and print a letter of apology	Write a letter to board president	48.8%	51.1%	100%	225
Principal drafted policy that he can prohibit articles he thinks are harmful	Draft memo to principal stating objections	36.8%	63.2%	100%	231
Editorial calling for abolishing Martin Luther King Day as a national holiday	Publish editorial if principal approved it	85.0%	15.0%	100%	231
Feature story on drug problem in your school that contains anonymous interviews	Publish feature if principal approved it	75.1%	24.9%	100%	233
News story about a demonstration protesting administration policy	Publish article if principal approved it	93.0%	7.0%	100%	230
Principal asked to see all copy before newspaper goes to print	Allow principal to read all copy	62.7%	37.3%	100%	228
Principal drafted policy that he can prohibit articles he thinks are harmful	Agree with what policy says	84.4%	15.6%	100%	231
Principal drafted policy that he can prohibit articles he thinks are harmful	Disagree but do nothing about policy	90.9%	9.1%	100%	231

On the next level of involvement, the school principal or administration is consulted. Table 18 above shows that about half of the advisers would not show an actual story to the principal, but would consult with the principal or school board president if necessary. An even greater proportion would express their concerns in written form.

Most advisers would not seek the principal's approval before a story was published – regardless of the topic or type of story. However, about one-fourth of them would not publish a story about a sensitive, in-school issue without the principal's approval.

Slightly more than one third of the teachers would allow the principal to read all of the copy, and an even smaller percentage would let the principal censor articles at will.

Table 19 indicates what happens when some advisers go outside the school for assistance. Most teachers would go to either their teachers' association or seek legal assistance. Very few would opt to go to the local newspaper.

Table 19. – Adviser Responses to Hypothetical Situations at the "Principal/Administration Involved" Level

Situation	Response	No	Yes	Total	N
Principal says you must write and print a letter of apology	File grievance with teachers' association	49.3%	50.7%	100%	225
Principal says you must write and print a letter of apology	Contact a lawyer	34.6%	65.3%	100%	225
Principal drafted policy that he can prohibit articles he thinks are harmful	Call local newspaper	90.0%	10.0%	100%	321

In summary, few advisers would take a total "hands-off" position. Only about one-third of them would publish sensitive, critical or controversial stories as they were written. Most advisers would take some sort of limited action in response to an article or situation that involves a

student's freedom of expression. More often than not, they would teach students how to edit these stories themselves. When advisers take control, they are most apt to tell students how to change articles rather than make the changes themselves

Most advisers would not seek the principal's approval before a sensitive, critical or controversial story was published. They would request that the principal trust the adviser's professional judgment or write a memo of protest. When advisers think that the principal has overstepped his or her bounds, most would go to a lawyer or file a grievance with their teachers' association.

Research Question 2b:

Do background characteristics play a role in how teachers strive to achieve that balance?

Certain characteristics in an adviser's background have an influence on how teachers respond to the hypothetical situations. The Table 20 below shows the first level adviser responses.

Table 20. – Influence of Background Characteristics in Hypothetical Situations at the "Students Only" Level

Hypothetical Situation	Response			
Principal asked to see all copy before newspaper goes to print	Refuse to allow principal to read copy			
Background Characteristic	No	Yes	Total	N
Locale				
Urban	92.0%	8.0%	100%	80
Suburban	87.6%	12.4%	100%	82
Rural/Town	100.0%	0.0%	100%	66
Total	92.1%	7.9%	100%	228
X^2=9.2, df 2, p<.01				
Journalism Class Load				
No classes	100.0%	0.0%	100%	35
< Half-time	96.2%	3.8%	100%	157
Half-time or >	72.8%	28.2%	100%	39
Total	92.6%	7.4%	100%	231
X^2=30.52, df 2, p<.00				
Journalism Teaching Experience				
New Teachers	100.0%	0.0%	100%	71
Average Years	92.5%	7.5%	100%	80
Veterans	85.0%	15.0%	100%	80
Total	92.2%	7.8%	100%	231
X2=11.79, df 2, p<.00				

As the table above indicates, suburban teachers, those with a heavy journalism class load and veteran teachers are more likely to take a "hands off" stance, even when the principal has asked see all copy.

Table 21. – Influence of Background Characteristics in Hypothetical Situations at the "Limited Adviser Involvement" Level

Hypothetical Situation	Response			
Article of questionable accuracy on teenage suicide	Point out factual errors for students to correct			
	Background Characteristic	No	Yes	Total	N
	Locale				
	Urban	44.8%	55.2%	100%	81
	Suburban	51.7%	48.3%	100%	83
	Town/Rural	27.8%	72.2%	100%	67
	Total	42.3%	57.7%	100%	231
	X^2=9.7, df 2, p<.01				
	Journalism Class Load				
	No classes	25.7%	74.3%	100%	35
	< Half-time	23.1%	76.9%	100%	157
	Half-time or >	46.5%	53.5%	100%	39
	Total	39.4%	60.6%	100%	231
	X2=10.4, df 2, p<.01				

As Table 21 above indicates, suburban advisers and those with heavy journalism class loads are least likely to actually point out the errors for the students to correct. Those who do not teach journalism classes and rural teachers are the most likely to take on this limited editorial function.

When teachers take over as editors, certified teachers are least likely to tell students to rewrite articles or stop publication of an article. Suburban teachers are also less apt to call for rewrites as Table 22 below shows.

Table 22 – Influence of Background Characteristics in Hypothetical Situations at the "Adviser Takes Over" Level (Part A)

Hypothetical Situation	Response			
News story about a demonstration protesting administration policy	Have student rewrite article to include administration's reasons			
	Background characteristic	No	Yes	Total	N
	Journalism Certification				
	Not Certified	92.7%	7.3%	100%	130
	Certified	79.3%	20.7%	100%	103
	Total	86.7%	13.3%	100%	233
	X^2=9.6, df 1, p<.00				
	Journalism Certification				
	Not Certified	53.3%	46.7%	100%	98
	Certified	28.8%	71.2%	100%	155
	Total	39.4%	60.6%	100%	233
	X^2=15.0, df 1, p<.00				
Editorial calling for abolishing Martin Luther King Day as a national holiday	Not allow students to publish				
	Journalism Certification				
	Not Certified	25.7%	74.3%	100%	35
	Certified	46.5%	53.5%	100%	157
	Total	39.4%	60.6%	100%	231
	X^2=5.5, df 1, p<.03				
	Have student rewrite editorial to include both sides				
	Locale				
	Urban	63.2%	36.8%	100%	81
	Suburban	79.8%	20.2%	100%	83
	Town/Rural	76.4%	23.6%	100%	67
	Total	63.2%	36.8%	100%	231
	X2=6.7, df 2, p<.03				

As Table 23 shows, new teachers and those who have no journalism classes are far more likely to step in and actually write and print a letter of apology themselves.

Veteran and those with a heavy journalism class load are least likely to make this step.

Table 23. – Influence of Background Characteristics in Hypothetical Situations at the "Adviser Takes Over" Level (Part B)

Hypothetical Situation	Response			
Principal says you must write and print a letter of apology	Write and print letter of apology			
Background Characteristic	No	Yes	Total	N
Journalism Teaching Experience				
New Teacher	84.5%	15.5%	100%	71
Average Years	92.5%	7.5%	100%	80
Veteran	97.5%	2.5%	100%	80
Total	91.7%	8.3%	100%	231
X^2=8.5, df 2, p<.01				
Journalism Class Load				
No Classes	82.9%	17.1%	100%	35
< Half-time	91.7%	8.3%	100%	157
Half-time or >	100.0%	0.0%	100%	39
Total	91.8%	8.2%	100%	231
X2=7.18, df 2, p<.03				

When the principal or other administrators become involved, once again, certain background characteristics do influence how teachers respond to the hypothetical situations. That influence is shown on Table 24

Table 24. – Influence of Background Characteristics in Hypothetical Situations at the "Principal/ Administration Involved" Level (Part A)

Hypothetical Situation	Response				
Principal asked to see all copy before newspaper goes to print	Ask principal to trust professional judgment				
	Background Characteristic	No	Yes	Total	N
	Journalism Teaching Experience				
	New Teacher	60.6%	39.4%	100%	71
	Average Years	37.5%	62.5%	100%	80
	Veteran	35.0%	65.0%	100%	80
	Total	43.7%	56.3%	100%	231
	X^2=11.9, df 2, p<.00				
	Journalism Certification				
	Not Certified	54.7%	45.3%	100%	109
	Certified	37.8%	62.2%	100%	122
	Total	47.2%	52.8%	100%	231
	X^2=7.0, df 1, p<.01				
Principal drafted policy he can prohibit articles he thinks are harmful	Draft memo to principal stating objections				
	Journalism Class Load				
	No classes	45.7%	54.3%	100%	35
	< Half-time	39.5%	60.5%	100%	157
	Half-time or >	20.5%	79.5%	100%	39
	Total	37.2%	62.8%	100%	231
	X^2=16.1, df 2, p<.05				
	Journalism Certification				
	Not Certified	48.2%	51.8%	100%	128
	Certified	32.4%	67.6%	100%	103
	Total	41.1%	58.9%	100%	231
	X^2=6.3, df 1, p<.01				
Principal says you must write and print a letter of apology	Write a letter to board president				
	Journalism Certification				
	Not Certified	60.6%	39.4%	100%	128
	Certified	45.1%	54.9%	100%	103
	Total	53.6%	46.4%	100%	231
	X2=6.0, df 1, p<.01				

As the previous table shows, new teachers and teachers who do not have journalism certification are less likely to ask the principal to trust their judgment or protest in

writing. Teachers with a heavy journalism class load are most likely to draft a memo of protest.

Table 25. – Influence of Background Characteristics in Hypothetical Situations at the "Principal /Administration Involved" Level (Part B)

Hypothetical Situation	Response			
Editorial calling for abolishing Martin Luther King Day as a national holiday	Publish editorial if principal approved it			
	Background Characteristic	No	Yes	Total	N
	Journalism Teaching Experience				
	New Teacher	81.7%	18.3%	100%	71
	Average years	76.3%	23.7%	100%	80
	Veteran	96.3%	13.7%	100%	80
	Total	84.8%	15.2%	100%	231
	X^2=13.2, df 2, p<.00				
Feature story on drug problem that contains anonymous interviews	Publish feature if principal approved it				
	Journalism Teaching Experience				
	New Teacher	60.6%	39.4%	100%	71
	Average Years	78.5%	21.5%	100%	80
	Veteran	85.0%	15.0%	100%	80
	Total	75.3%	24.7%	100%	231
	X^2=12.9, df 2, p<.00				
	Journalism Class Load				
	No classes	45.7%	54.3%	100%	35
	< Half-time	79.6%	20.4%	100%	157
	Half-time or >	82.0%	18.0%	100%	39
	Total	74.9%	25.1%	100%	231
	X^2=18.7, df 2, p<.00				
	Locale				
	Urban	82.8%	17.2%	100%	81
	Suburban	78.7%	21.3%	100%	83
	Town/Rural	66.7%	33.3%	100%	67
	Total	76.6%	23.4%	100%	231
	X2=6.0, df 2, p<.05				

Table 26. – Influence of Background Characteristics in Hypothetical Situations at the "Principal /Administration Involved" Level (Part C)

Hypothetical Situation	Response			
News Story about a demonstration protesting administration policy	Publish article if principal approved it			
Background Characteristic	No	Yes	Total	N
Journalism Teaching Experience				
New Teacher	90.1	9.9%	100%	71
Average Years	90.0%	10.0%	100%	80
Veteran	98.8%	1.2%	100%	80
Total	93.1%	6.9%	100%	231
X^2=6.1, df 2, p<.05				
Journalism Class Load				
No classes	80.0%	20.0%	100%	35
< Half-time	94.3%	5.7%	100%	157
Half-time or >	100.0%	0.0%	100%	39
Total	93.1%	6.9%	100%	231
X2=12.5, df 2, p<.00				

As Tables 25 and 26 show veteran teachers and those with a heavy journalism class load are the least likely to require that the principal approve of an article before it is published regardless of subject. On a potentially sensitive, in-school issue, the rural adviser is most likely to seek the principal's approval.

Table 27. – Influence of Background Characteristics in Hypothetical Situations at the "Principal/Administration Involved" Level (Part D)

Hypothetical Situation	Response			
Principal asked to see all copy before newspaper goes to print	Allow principal to read all copy			
	Background Characteristic	No	Yes	Total	N
	Journalism Teaching Experience				
	New Teacher	46.5%	53.5%	100%	71
	Average Years	63.7%	36.3%	100%	80
	Veteran	78.8%	21.2%	100%	80
	Total	63.6%	36.4%	100%	231
	X^2=10.7, df 2, p<.00				
	Journalism Class Load				
	No classes	42.9%	57.1%	100%	35
	< Half-time	63.7%	36.3%	100%	157
	Half-time or >	79.5%	20.5%	100%	39
	Total	63.2%	36.8%	100%	231
	X^2=16.9, df 2, p<.00				
Principal drafted policy that he can prohibit articles he thinks are harmful	Agree with what policy says				
	Journalism Class Load				
	No classes	74.3%	25.7%	100%	35
	< Half-time	85.4%	14.6%	100%	157
	Half-time or >	94.9%	5.1%	100%	39
	Total	85.3%	14.7%	100%	231
	X2=6.2, df 2, p<.04				

As Table 27 shows, new teachers and those who teach no journalism classes are most likely to allow the principal to read all copy before the paper is printed. Those who teach no journalism classes are also most apt to let the principal censor any articles that he thinks are harmful.

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Table 28. – Influence of Background Characteristics in Hypothetical Situations at the "Outsiders Involved" Level

Hypothetical Situation	Response			
Principal says you must write and print a letter of apology	File grievance with teachers' association			
	Background Characteristic	No	Yes	Total	N
	Journalism Certification				
	Not Certified	59.9%	40.1%	100%	128
	Certified	46.9%	53.1%	100%	103
	Total	54.0%	56.0%	100%	231
	X^2=4.2, df 1, p<.04				
	Journalism Teaching Experience				
	New Teacher	60.6%	39.4%	100%	71
	Average Years	38.8%	61.2%	100%	80
	Veteran	56.3%	43.7%	100%	80
	Total	51.5%	48.5%	100%	231
	X^2=8.3, df 2, p<.02				
	Contact a lawyer				
	Journalism Teaching Experience				
	New Teacher	50.7%	49.3%	100%	71
	Average Years	30.0%	70.0%	100%	80
	Veteran	30.0%	70.0%	100%	80
	Total	63.6%	36.4%	100%	231
	X^2=9.1, df 2, p<.01				
Principal drafted policy that he can prohibit articles he thinks are harmful	Call local newspaper				
	Journalism Teaching Experience				
	New Teacher	94.4%	5.6%	100%	71
	Average Years	81.3%	18.2%	100%	80
	Veteran	83.8%	16.2%	100%	80
	Total	86.2%	13.8%	100%	231
	X2=6.0, df 2, p<.05				

At the final level on the adviser involvement continuum, the adviser goes outside of the school for help. The findings are given on Table 28 above.

Teachers with journalism certification and those with the average number of years teaching would be most likely to continue to work within the educational system by filing a grievance with their teachers' association. New teachers, however, would be least likely to go outside the sphere of the educational institutions and give the story to their local newspaper.

In summary, suburban journalism teachers, those with heavy journalism class loads, veteran teachers and those with journalism certification are most apt to support student freedom of expression. New teachers, teachers from rural schools, non-certified teachers and those who do not teach journalism classes are most likely to seek assistance from the principal or make changes themselves when a student story is sensitive, controversial or critical of the school administration.

Research Question 3:

What issues cause the most conflict between advisers and students and/or administrators?

Conflict between advisers, students and administrators is often a result of the topic of the story involved. The next section of the questionnaire consisted of three open-ended questions. The first question was about topics that would require prior review and approval by the principal and the second, topics that concerned the teachers enough to show

them to the principal. The third was about topics over which teachers and students had disagreed in the past year.

For the first question, teachers were merely asked to list story topics that they could think of that would require approval by the principal before the story was published. Since there was no required number of topics, some teachers wrote many; others wrote none. If a teacher listed many topics, all were included in the tally. The first tally of individual topics for this question was over 50. However, since most of them were listed by only one teacher, to make the list more manageable, the list was collapsed to the nine topics that were listed by 10 or more teachers. In the table that follows, stories are listed in descending order with the first topic as the one that was mentioned most often. While no topic receives over 18 percent of the responses, a total of 192 is included.

The topic listed most often was "sex and or sexual practices." Eighteen percent or 45 advisers would show principals these articles. Next comes "substance abuse" that included alcohol and drug-related stories which was listed by 13 percent of 31 advisers. Stories critical of school personnel competency came in third with 11 percent or 27 teachers listing this topic. This topic included criticism of the competency of the superintendent, principal, teachers and other personnel employed by the school district.

Table 29. – Story Topics Requiring Principal's Approval

Rank	Story Topic	N	% Total
1.	Sexual practices and sexuality	45	18
2.	Substance abuse (drugs, alcohol)	31	13
3.	School personnel competency (principal, teachers, all district employees	27	11
4.	School district policies	22	9
5.	Anything controversial	20	8
6.	Teenage pregnancy	10	4
7.	Anything negative that would put the school in a bad light	16	6
8.	Teenage suicide	11	4
9.	Violence and fighting at school	10	4
	Total	192	N=238

Sexual practices and sexuality, substance abuse and stories about school personnel competency were the top three topics teachers would show to the principal. For the next question, advisers were asked to go a step beyond naming story topics that they would show to the principal to those that they actually had shown to the principal. The second open-ended question in the Story Topics section of the questionnaire asked: "During the past year, which story topics concerned you enough to show them to the principal before they were published?" and then it asked respondents to indicate "What happened to each story?"

Over 35 different responses were given to this question. This time far fewer teachers completed the question so the

number of responses was also considerably less. Those topics listed by five or more teachers are listed Table 30.

This table also reflects the number of teachers giving each of the following responses to the second part of the question, "What happened to each story?" Advisers gave three different general responses:

1. "The story ran as it was before we showed it to the principal."
2. "The principal made changes in the story."
3. "The principal pulled or deleted the story."

As the table indicates, a very small percentage of the teachers reported that they had shown a story on any one topic to their principal in the past year. At most 10 percent of the advisers showed their principals stories on any one topic.

Table 30. —Story Topics Shown to the Principal and What Happened to Each

Rank	Story Topics	No Change		Changed		Deleted		% Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	
1	Stories critical of school personnel (school board, administration, teachers, all district employees)	20	77%	1	4%	5	19%	26	10%
2	Sex practices and sexuality	12	55%	6	27%	4	18%	22	9%
3	Principal reads all stories	5	31%	11	69%	0	0%	16	6%
4	AIDS	8	73%	1	9%	2	18%	11	5%
5	Fighting, violence and guns at school	4	44%	2	22%	3	33%	9	4%
6	Racism and racial strife or riots	2	29%	2	29%	3	43%	7	3%
6	Sexual harassment	2	29%	3	43%	2	29%	7	3%
6	Substance abuse (drugs and alcohol)	4	57%	3	43%	0	0%	7	3%
7	Academic eligibility for athletes	3	50%	1	17%	2	33%	6	2%
8	Letters to the editor	4	80%	0	0%	1	20%	5	2%
8	Teenage suicide	3	60%	1	20%	1	20%	5	1%
	Total	67	55%	31	26%	23	19%	121	N= 238

The second most frequent topic listed was "stories that were critical of the school personnel." Again, this topic was listed by only 10 percent of the teachers responding. Here the principals did not change 20 of the stories, but did change one.

When stories on the second topic, sex practices and sexuality, was shown to the principals, 12 of them made no changes, six did. Again, the percentage showing the story to

the principal was small, around 9 percent of the teachers responding.

Six percent indicated that their "principal reads all of the stories." Of these, five teachers said that the principal did not change stories and 11 teachers said that the principal changed stories before they were printed.

Principals were most apt to pull stories that were critical of teachers or coaches. Stories about sex and sexuality were next, followed by stories about fighting, violence and guns in school and stories about racism and racial strife or riots. They made the fewest changes in stories that were critical of the administration or school board and stories about teenage pregnancy and birth control.

If one looks only at each topic individually, there appears to be little cause for concern. When the responses are totaled across topics, 56 percent of the 120 responses fall within category where "the story was not changed." But, in 26 percent of the responses, the principal edited the story. And in 18 percent of the cases, the principal deleted the story. The principal, therefore, changed or pulled 44 percent of the stories that teachers showed to them.

So far, stories about sex and sexual practices and those critical of school personnel are the top two topics for both potential and actual prior review by the school administration. Are they also the most often cited for conflict between adviser and staff?

The third open-ended question, "What story topics have you or your students disagreed about in the past year" also included the "what happened to each story" follow up. As in the previous question, only those responses listed by five or more teachers (2 percent) are included in Table 31. This time there were several "ties" where the same number of teachers reported disagreement on different topics. Those stories are listed in alphabetical order.

This time five different responses were given for the "what happened to each" part of the question. These categories are:

1. The story ran was it was originally written.
2. The story was changed before it was printed.
3. The story was rewritten to include both sides of the disagreement.
4. The students pulled or stopped the story before it was published.
5. The adviser pulled or stopped the story before it was published.

Table 31. - Story Topics Where Students and Adviser have Disagreed and What Happened to Each

#	Topic	As written		Changed		Rewritten		Students stopped		Adviser Stopped		Total N	% Total
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Criticism of teachers, coaches or school officials	3	12%	5	20%	5	20%	4	16%	8	32%	25	10%
2	Sexual acts and practices	0	0%	8	57%	2	14%	0	0%	4	29%	14	6%
3	Offensive language, illustrations or photos	1	9%	5	45%	0	0%	0	0%	5	45%	11	4%
4	School activities and facilities	2	25%	3	38%	0	0%	0	0%	3	38%	8	3%
5	Racial strife and racism	2	29%	2	29%	3	43%	0	0%	0	0%	7	3%
5	Sexual harassment of student by teacher	2	29%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	5	71%	7	3%
6	Substance abuse (drugs and alcohol)	1	17%	0	0%	0	0%	3	50%	2	33%	6	2%
7	Criticism of government officials	0	0%	2	40%	1	20%	0	0%	2	40%	5	2%
7	Gangs	1	20%	1	20%	1	20%	1	20%	1	20%	5	2%
7	Satire or lampoon	0	0%	2	40%	0	0%	0	0%	3	60%	5	2%
	Total	12	13%	28	30%	12	13%	8	9%	33	35%	93	N= 238

As was true in the earlier question, only a small percentage of the teachers listed any one topic. The largest percentage of teachers was the 10 percent (or 25 teachers) who responded that they disagreed with their students over stories that criticized teachers or coaches. In this case, a third of the stories were removed by the advisers. The rest were fairly evenly divided among the other four categories.

Even so, twice as many stories were stopped by the teacher than the students.

Second to stories that were critical of teachers were the stories describing sexual acts and practices. For these stories, over half of them were edited before they were printed. Almost a third of them were removed by the teachers.

As with the other two open-ended questions, the individual responses show little evidence of censorship, but when combined across responses, a different picture emerges. When the categories are totaled across the topics for all respondents, of 111 cases of disagreement were reported. The most frequent response category (in 39 stories or 35 percent of the total) was that the teacher pulled or stopped the story. Second was that the story was changed, which occurred in 34 stories or 31 percent of the time. Fourteen stories (13 percent) ran as they were originally written, and only eight stories (7 percent) were pulled or stopped by the students.

Here the teacher edited or pulled two-thirds of the stories written on topics where teacher and students disagree. This could mean that teachers showed principals those topics they were uncertain about and the principal let about half of them go through. Where there is no uncertainty, the story was changed to conform to the teacher's expectations or the story was pulled.

Prior Approval Policy

Eighteen percent of the teachers said that their "school or district has a policy that requires the principal's approval of controversial materials before they appear in the students' publication." This figure is similar to Lain's finding that 14.5 percent of schools have a policy that the principal screens all of the copy. Thomas Dickson's 1992 national study also found that 14 percent of the principals "read the newspaper before publication" quite often or always.[47] This finding also approximates the 1991 Journalism Education Association finding that 12.5 percent of their member schools have a policy of prior review.[48] Looking at the combined figures reveals most principals are not reading stories about controversial topics before they are published. However, one in seven of them reads everything.

In Summary

Comparing the results of this current study with national education data and other recent studies indicates that teachers and schools included in this study are representative of the nation as a whole. Their responses to statements about a teacher's responsibilities for protecting student freedom of expression are also predictable. When asked if journalism conventions such as freedom of

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[47]Dickson, How Goes the Debate, 13.

[48]Jack Kennedy, "What's Up with JEA: Journalism Education Association Report" Newswire, March 1993, 1991.

expression, freedom from prior review and censorship are more important than educational theory, the overwhelming response was "yes." However, when these same teachers were confronted with situations in hypothetical situations, the teachers were more apt to fall back on educational concepts such as control of the classroom situation and chain of command and responsibility.

Some teachers are, however, more likely to take a position in support of student freedom of expression. Teachers with journalism certification rarely consult the principal or seek his approval. On the other hand, teachers who do not have journalism certification are more likely to seek the principal's approval for potentially controversial topics.

Rural teachers are more apt to take controversial topics to the principal than their urban or suburban counterparts. When the principal wants changes made, urban teachers are most likely to make changes themselves. These teachers may reflect the "battle zone" mentality that pervades much of the inner cities. They are more likely to demand rewrites on stories that may heighten racial tension, but are less concerned than their rural counterparts about stories concerning a drug problem in their schools. Drugs and racial tension are a factor in their everyday lives. With so much conflict in the city outside the school, these teachers are apt to avoid fanning the flames in the student newspaper if possible.

Like the rural and non-certified teacher, the teacher who teaches no journalism classes is most apt to seek the principal's approval on controversial subjects. He or she will also let a story die rather than confront the principal when disagreements arise. The teacher with a heavy journalism class load is more likely to support the students when there is a disagreement with the principal and will not allow the principal to interfere with the students. Thus, those who have a bigger time commitment to journalism teaching during each school day are more apt to fight for journalistic principles. Since these people are at least half-time journalism teachers, their level of commitment and concern to journalism should naturally be greater.

New teachers seek the principal's approval more often than those who have taught more than two years. That could be because a new teacher's contract can easily be terminated by the principal during the probationary period. The seasoned veteran is most likely to encourage students to cover sensitive or controversial topics and less likely to demand the right to veto student decisions.

Stories about school personnel competency and sex and sexuality are the ones that teachers, students and administrations are most apt to disagree about. When teachers and students disagreed, teachers stopped or pulled one-third of the stories.

In about one in seven high schools, the principal reads every story before that paper is published. In the other

schools, when a teacher is concerned enough about a specific story to show it to the principal before it is published, half of them were not changed. Of those that remain, about half of those were edited or had the content modified in some way, and the remaining stories were killed or pulled from the publication. The final chapter will talk about what all of this means for high school journalism advisers today.

Conclusions

A continuum of the types of people involved in freedom of expression issues was developed from the literature and both descriptive and chi-square results were placed along that continuum. The following results were obtained:

Research Question 1a: Who is responsible?

Most teachers support the position that the student editor has the final responsibility for content decisions. As the amount of teacher involvement increases, most teachers support the statements that journalism standards – such as those that warn against the publishing of unprotected speech – should guide the adviser. When advisers takes over, they are almost evenly divided on whether teachers or students make final content decisions, but clearly favor the adviser's right to decide over that of the principal.

Most teachers do not want the principal, administrators or community members involved. Most advisers say that they

and their students – not the principal or outsiders – are responsible for determining the contents. They are also in agreement that the adviser should remove language that falls under the "unprotected speech" rubric from student stories.

Research Question 1b:

Do background characteristics play a role in how teachers view this responsibility?

Advisers with journalism certification, those with a heavy journalism class load, veteran teachers and suburban teachers are more likely than their counterparts to assume responsibility for supporting student freedom of expression across the involvement continuum. Those for whom journalism is an extra-curricular assignment, new teachers, and teachers who do not have journalism certification are least likely to do so at all involvement levels.

Research Question 2a:

Do advisers strive to balance the right of school authorities to control the educational process with students' First Amendment rights?

Few advisers would take a total "hands-off" position that students alone are responsible for the contents of their papers. Only about one-third of them would publish sensitive, critical or controversial stories as they were written. Most advisers would take some sort of limited action in response to an article or situation that involves a student's freedom of expression. More often than not, they would teach student's how to edit such stories. When

advisers take control, they are most apt to tell students how to change articles rather than make the changes themselves

Most advisers would not seek the principal's approval before a sensitive, critical or controversial story is published but would request that the principal trust the adviser's professional judgment or write a memo of protest. When advisers think the principal has overstepped his bounds, most would go to a lawyer or file a grievance with their teachers' association.

Research Question 2b:

Do background characteristics play a role in how teachers strive to achieve that balance?

Suburban journalism teachers, those with heavy journalism class loads, veteran teachers and those with journalism certification are most apt to support student freedom of expression. New teachers, teachers from rural schools, teachers who do not have journalism certification and those who do not teach journalism classes are most likely to seek assistance from the principal. They are also more likely to make changes themselves when a student story is sensitive, controversial or critical of the school administration.

Research Question 3:

What issues cause the most conflict between advisers and students and/or administrators?

Stories about school personnel competency and sex and sexuality are the ones that teachers, students and

administrations are most apt to disagree about. If a teacher shows a story to the principal, he is apt to pull or change 44 percent of them. When teachers and students disagree, teachers stop or pull one-third of the stories.

Recommendations

This study shows that stories that are critical of other teachers, coaches or school officials or those about sexual acts and practices are most apt to be the source of disagreement between teachers, students and administrators. Does this mean that the adviser should avoid conflict by either forbidding students to write about sex or school personnel or getting the principal's approval before such stories are printed? For biological reasons – if nothing else – the development of a person's sexuality is the most important topic for adolescence. To ignore this topic is to deny reality.

Another major reality for high school students is that many are in conflict with school rules, regulations and personnel. To rebel against and test the bounds of authority is another important step in attaining adulthood. So, to avoid conflict by not allowing students to discuss either of these major topics in their student newspapers is to deny students an outlet for them to express themselves as they go through this incredibly difficult and frustrating period in their lives.

However, if a journalism teacher gives free reign, other teachers, the administrators and the parents are apt to complain to or take action against the adviser. In some cases advisers have lost their jobs because of something the students printed in the newspaper.

Implications for Teachers

The answer to this journalism teacher's dilemma appears to be a pragmatic or situational one. Veteran teachers have learned that one must wear several different hats – often at the same time. Those who have the most training are the most comfortable in doing this – as are advisers who spend a greater portion of their time each day teaching journalism.

The locale where a teacher teaches is also a factor. For instance, the issue of gangs and racial strife is an everyday factor in the lives of inner city teachers and their students. Those who live in rural areas are far more apt to "know everybody" and so issues of confidentiality in topics such as sexual orientation must be handled with greater care to protect student privacy. Again the best bet for adviser success is to know (or study) the audience and community and to make certain that the students do the same.

Perhaps the greatest concern is that the conflicts between the ideals of journalism and the pragmatic realities of everyday school life cause veteran teachers to take the path of least resistance. For those who do not "jump ship" by going back to teaching just English (or some other area), many veterans survive by taking complete control of the

paper. While this strategy may avoid conflict with the administration, a great deal of conflict with students arises. Again, a middle ground must be sought. The adviser must first teach and then trust his or her students. The solution to the adviser's dilemma is a delicate balance at best.

Maintaining the balance between the two is difficult. Often this responsibility falls on the shoulders of those who are least prepared to do so. The new teacher with little journalism training who also spends most of his or her day teaching in a different subject area is least likely to acknowledge any responsibility for protecting student rights.

Implications for School Districts

Principals, administrators, school boards and parents need to understand the value of student expression for effective education. High schools need policies that allow student journalists to exercise First Amendment press rights responsibility.

District Student Freedom of Expression Policy

The Student Press Law Center model policy and the state student freedom of expression laws recommend that school publications be designated as:

> Forums for student expression and as voices of the uninhibited, robust, free and open discussion of issues. Each publication should provide and opportunity for students to inquire, question and exchange ideas. Content should reflect all areas of student interest,

including topics about which there may be dissent or controversy.[49]

The model guidelines also recommends that there be no prior review by school administrators. It also addresses the role and job security of the adviser:

> The adviser is not a censor. No teacher who advises a student publication will be fired, transferred or removed from the advisership by reason of his or her refusal to exercise editorial control over the student publication or to otherwise suppress the protected free expression of student journalists.[50]

Teacher Certification and Training

The findings of this study point toward establishing policies that favor the hiring of certified journalism teachers. In the event that this is not possible, districts should provide opportunities and incentives for teachers to become certified in journalism. The more university-level journalism education that high school journalism teachers have, the more confident they are about dealing with conflict. Schools that call on existing staff to advise the school newspaper or yearbook should also encourage and provide opportunities for their journalism teachers to become certified and take continuing education hours.

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[49]Student Press Law Center Model Guidelines for Student Publications, Section I.

[50]SPLC Model Guidelines, Section VI.

Teacher Turnover and Class Load

Those teachers who stay on the job for several years are also more knowledgeable and confident, and, therefore, better able to protect their students' rights and keep their jobs at the same time. Teachers who spend a greater portion of each day teaching journalism are also more apt to support their students' rights. Since experienced teachers are better able to balance the two, districts should provide incentives for teachers to stay on the job. One strategy is to increase the number of journalism classes taught by teachers. Teachers who devote more of each day to teaching journalism classes are more likely to protect students' rights and their own job security.

In Summary

Death By Cheeseburger: High School Journalism in the 1990s and Beyond, a book committed to the idea that all high school students deserve vehicles of expression and communication, makes the following argument:

> When student expression is defended, newspapers flourish. Eager young reporters write bold, insightful, sometimes controversial articles that portray life for students and the school. The newspaper gives both news of the school and offers a public forum for ideas. When student expression is squelched, newspapers fade... Students may be learning the basics of newspaper production, but they are not learning the principles of journalism.[51]

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[51] Death By Cheeseburger (Arlington, VA: The Freedom Forum, 1994), 105.

Establishing policies that employ the strategies outlined in this final chapter can help tip the scales in favor of a stronger and more vigorous student press.

APPENDIX A: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

_____ID#

SURVEY OF HIGH SCHOOL JOURNALISM EDUCATORS

This survey is part of a study about how high school journalism educators view their jobs. *All of your responses will be completely confidential.*

The term "journalism educator" means those people who teach journalism classes who, more often than not, also advise one or more student publications.

CASE STUDIES

Respond to these situations as if you were the adviser of the student newspaper Mark an "X" in the box next to all of the responses that you agree with. You may mark more than one or several responses for each situation.

1. Your student editor has turned in an editorial criticizing the establishment of Martin Luther King Day as a national holiday. At the end, the editorial calls for abolishing of the holiday. What do you do:

   ☐ I would not allow the students to publish the editorial as is.
   ☐ I would publish the editorial only if the principal approved it.
   ☐ I would have the student rewrite the editorial to include both sides of the issue.
   ☐ I would allow the students to publish the editorial as is.
   ☐ Other: (Please explain) _____

2. An article on teenage suicide appearing in your last issue created quite a stir. Members of the community have called the principal and complained that it was not accurate. Now the principal wants you to correct any factual errors in all future editions of the paper. What do you do:

   ☐ I would read the copy and correct the mistakes as instructed.
   ☐ I would read the copy and point out factual errors to the students for them to correct before it is printed.
   ☐ I would teach students to proof carefully and verify facts in all stories before they are turned in.
   ☐ I would refuse to read the copy and correct the mistakes.
   ☐ Other: (Please explain) _____

3. A student turns in a feature story on the drug problem in your school. It explains the extent of the problem in your school and contains anonymous interviews with students who are drug users. What do you do?

   ☐ I would allow the students to publish the story as it stands.
   ☐ I would publish the story, and alert the principal that a story on the drug problem in the school will appear in the next issue.
   ☐ I would publish the feature story only if the principal approved it.

- ☐ I would have the student rewrite the story omitting information from anonymous sources.
- ☐ Other: (Please explain) _____

4. About 25 students carried signs during lunch one day in protest of the administration policy that students cannot wear hats or clothing that advertise alcoholic beverages. The editor covers the demonstration and turns in a news story for the paper. What do you do:

   - ☐ I would forbid the students publish it.
   - ☐ I would have the student rewrite the article to include the administration's reasons for the policy.
   - ☐ I would publish the article only if the principal approved it.
   - ☐ I would allow the students to publish this article as written.
   - ☐ Other: (Please explain) _____

5. You have a new principal who is very concerned about the image of the school in the community. The principal claims a professional obligation to stop publication of something that will put the school in a bad light. As a result, the principal has now asked to see all copy for the newspaper before it goes to print. What do you do?

   - ☐ I would allow the principal to read all of the copy.
   - ☐ I would ask the principal to trust my professional judgment and forego reading the copy.
   - ☐ I would refuse to allow the principal to read any copy.
   - ☐ I would tell the students on staff about the principal's concern.
   - ☐ Other: (Please explain) _____

6. Your principal ignored the school newspaper until an editorial appeared that criticized various school board members. The school board president, one of the prime targets of the editorial, sent a memo to the principal asking him to suspend you. The memo charged you with irresponsibility and with allowing a group of students to use the paper to mount a "witch hunt." If you want to return to your job, the principal says you must write a letter of apology and print it in the next issue of the paper What would you do?

   - ☐ I would write a letter to the board president explaining my position.
   - ☐ I would contact a lawyer to determine what my rights are.
   - ☐ I would file a grievance with my teachers' association.
   - ☐ Other: (Please explain) _____

7. Your principal has drafted a policy saying administrators can prohibit publication of articles in the student newspaper that they think are harmful even though such articles might not be legally libelous, obscene or disruptive. The principal says that as long as the school board pays some portion of the bills, school administrators have control over what is printed in the school paper. What would you do about this proposed policy?

   - ☐ I would do nothing because I agree with what the policy says.
   - ☐ I would disagree, but do nothing about the policy.
   - ☐ I would draft a memo to the principal stating my objections to the policy.
   - ☐ I would call the local newspaper and tell them about the policy.

☐ Other: (Please explain) _____

RESPONSIBILITIES: *Respond to these statements as if you were the adviser of the student newspaper Circle the choice that most closely correspond to your level of agreement with each of the following statements.*

8. The student editor should have final responsibility for all of the paper's content.

agree strongly	agree somewhat	neutral	disagree somewhat	disagree strongly

9. Stories in a student newspaper should not offend members of the community outside of the school.

agree strongly	agree somewhat	neutral	disagree somewhat	disagree strongly

10. Each teacher in the school should approve stories that include information about him or her.

agree strongly	agree somewhat	neutral	disagree somewhat	disagree strongly

11. The principal should approve all controversial stories before they are published in the newspaper.

agree strongly	agree somewhat	neutral	disagree somewhat	disagree strongly

12. Student newspaper advisers and not the students should make final decisions about the papers' contents.

agree strongly	agree somewhat	neutral	disagree somewhat	disagree strongly

13. The student newspaper adviser should be guided more by journalistic standards than educational theory when advising the student newspaper.

agree strongly	agree somewhat	neutral	disagree somewhat	disagree strongly

14. The student newspaper adviser should remove language in student stories that would advocate violence.

agree strongly	agree somewhat	neutral	disagree somewhat	disagree strongly

15. The student newspaper adviser should remove language in student stories that describe sexual acts or practices.

agree strongly	agree somewhat	neutral	disagree somewhat	disagree strongly

16. The adviser should remove obscene words from student stories.

agree strongly	agree somewhat	neutral	disagree somewhat	disagree strongly

17. Student newspaper advisers and not the principal should make final decisions about the papers' contents.

agree strongly	agree somewhat	neutral	disagree somewhat	disagree strongly

STORY TOPICS: *Write your answer in the space below. (Use an additional sheet of paper if desired.)*

18. What story topics can you think of that would require approval by the principal before the story is published?

19. During the past year, which story topics concerned you enough to show them to the principal before they were published? What happened to each story?

20. What story topics have you and your students disagreed about in the past year. What happened to each story?

YOUR SCHOOL: *Check all that apply to your current school: To answer each question, mark an "X" in the appropriate box:*

21. Does your school publish a student-produced newspaper?
    ☐ Yes ☐ No

22. Does your school publish a student-produced yearbook or annual?
    ☐ Yes ☐ No

23. Does your school or district have a policy that requires the principal's approval of controversial materials before they appear in the students' publications?
    ☐ Yes ☐ No

ADVISER BACKGROUND: *The questions in this section refer to you, the journalism educator. To answer each question, mark an "X" in the appropriate space and write in answers where indicated:*

24. Gender:
    ☐ Male ☐ Female

25. Check the highest degree you obtained.
    ☐ Bachelor's
    ☐ Master's
    ☐ Doctorate
    ☐ Other: Please explain

26. Did you major in journalism?
    ☐ Yes ☐ No

27. If you did not major in journalism, have you taken any journalism classes or workshops for college credit?
    ☐ Yes ☐ No

28. Are you certified to teach journalism?
    ☐ Yes ☐ No

29. Are you tenured (on continuing contract)?
    ☐ Yes ☐ No

30. About how many years have you been a high school teacher? _____

31. About what percentage of the classes you are teaching this year are journalism classes? _____%

32. Do you advise any student publications?
    ☐ Yes ☐ No

33. How did you get the position of adviser? (Please explain)

JOURNALISM EXPERIENCE: *About how many YEARS have you been a:*

34. Journalism teacher _____

35. Newspaper teacher/adviser _____

36. Yearbook teacher/adviser _____

37. Photography, literary magazine, or broadcast journalism teacher/adviser _____

38. Do you have any professional journalism experience: *(If you answer "yes," please describe)*
    ☐ Yes ☐ No

FOLLOW UP INFORMATION: Would you like a copy of the research summary when it is completed?
☐ Yes ☐ No

THANK YOU!